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APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO SCOTCH RUMORS OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP'S FLEXIBILITY ON THE QUESTION OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT HAS UNAMBIGUOUSLY REAFFIRMED MOSCOW'S POLICY ON AFGHANISTAN. PUTTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR LACK OF A SETTLEMENT MAINLY ON THE U.S., THE ARTICLE ACCUSES PAKISTAN OF DELAYING AN AGREEMENT, AND HINTS AT THE POSSIBILITY OF CROSS BORDER OPERATIONS. IT PLACES THE USSR SQUARELY BEHIND THE DRA AND THE "IRREVERSIBLE" APRIL REVOLUTION, WHILE HEWING STRICTLY TO MOSCOW'S PREVIOUS POSITION ON THE TERMS OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

AN AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT  
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3. PRAVDA DECEMBER 16 CARRIES THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE PUBLIC COMMENTARY ON AFGHANISTAN SINCE ANDROPOV BECAME SECRETARY GENERAL. THE UNSIGNED EDITORIAL, ENTITLED "WHO OPPOSES A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE AFGHAN PROBLEM," STOUTLY DEFENDS MOSCOW'S ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN AND FIRMLY RESTATES THE SOVIET/DRA POSITION ON A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

THE PROBLEM: U.S. INTERFERENCE  
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4. MOST OF THE EDITORIAL'S POLEMICS ARE FOCUSED ON THE U.S., WHICH IT CLAIMS IS USING AFGHANISTAN, ALONG WITH CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE GULF, TO STRENGTHEN ITS MILITARY POSITION IN THE REGION. CRITICISM OF PAKISTAN AND OTHERS IS RESTRAINED. ALTHOUGH PAKISTAN IS CAST LARGELY AS AN OBJECT  
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OF U.S. STRATEGIC SCHEMES, THE PAKISTANI LEADERSHIP IS PORTRAYED AS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "EXTREMELY SLOW" PROGRESS TOWARDS A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. EGYPTIAN DELIVERIES OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT TO THE REBELS ARE MENTIONED, BUT CHINA AND OTHER COUNTRIES ARE NOT.

SUPPORT FOR THE DRA  
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5. THE EDITORIAL STRONGLY ENDORSES THE POPA AND  
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DRA, AND CALLS THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS IN AFGHANISTAN "IRREVERSIBLE." IT REAFFIRMS THAT THE AFGHAN REGIME CAN COUNT ON THE "SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY" OF THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES.

VEILED THREAT

6. THE EDITORIAL ALSO CONTAINS A VEILED THREAT DIRECTED AT PAKISTAN. NOTING THAT THE DRA HAS SHOWN "RESTRAINT" IN CONDUCTING MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST "INTERVENTIONIST BANDS" TO AVOID ENLARGING THE "CRISIS." PRAYDA ADDS POINTEDLY THAT THE DRA "HAS NOT EXERCISED ITS LEGAL RIGHT TO PURSUE BANDIT FORMATIONS AS THEY RETURN TO THEIR FOREIGN BASES." (COMMENT: WHILE THE NOTION OF HOT PURSUIT IS NOT NEW, THIS IS AN UNUSUAL AND RARE PUBLIC REMINDER OF PAKISTAN'S VULNERABILITIES. END COMMENT.)

POLITICAL SETTLEMENT -- NO CHANGE IN TERMS

7. THE EDITORIAL REPEATS MOSCOW'S LONG-STANDING POSITION THAT AN END TO OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE AND

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ACTION EUR-01

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USMISSION USNATO  
AMEMBASSY KABUL  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
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E.O. 12386: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PEPR, UR, US, AF

SUBJECT: SOVIETS REAFFIRM STAND ON AFGHANISTAN  
INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES OF NON RESUMPTION WILL  
MAKE SOVIET TROOP WITHDRAWAL POSSIBLE. AT THE SAME  
TIME, IT NOTES FOR THE RECORD THAT THE SOVIET

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PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN IS "LIMITED AND TEMPORARY"  
AND STRESSES THAT THE USSR HAS NO INTENTION OF

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TURNING AFGHANISTAN INTO A "BASE" FOR AGGRESSIVE ACTION, REENDORING THE DRA'S MAY 1980 AND AUGUST 1981 PROPOSALS AS THE BASIS FOR A SETTLEMENT, THE EDITORIAL NOTES IN ITS FINAL PARAGRAPH THAT THE QUESTION OF SOVIET WITHDRAWAL CAN BE EXAMINED IN THE CONTEXT OF SUCH A SETTLEMENT.

8. COMMENT: THE PRAYDA EDITORIAL SEEMS TO US DESIGNED MAINLY TO PUT TO REST SPECULATION THAT ANDROPOV'S RISE TO POWER AND EARLY MEETINGS WITH BABRAK AND ZIA PRESAGED A SHIFT IN THE SOVIET APPROACH TO A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN. WITH THE CONCLUSION OF THE UNGA DEBATE ON AFGHANISTAN, THE COMPLETION OF THE ARAB LEAGUE'S VISIT TO MOSCOW, AND ZIA'S WASHINGTON VISIT HAVING PRODUCED NO DISCERNIBLE SHIFT IN THE PAKISTANI POSITION, MOSCOW MAY WELL HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THERE IS LITTLE FURTHER TO BE GAINED BY A POLICY OF CALCULATED AMBIGUITY ON AFGHANISTAN. DESPITE PRAYDA'S REFERENCES TO THE "TEMPORARY" NATURE OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT, TODAY'S EDITORIAL HAS EFFECTIVELY MADE BREZHNEV'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY ANDROPOV'S. END COMMENT.

9. FOR KABUL: MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. ZIMMERMANN

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